

r/HFY · Posted by [u/daecrist](#) 6 hours ago 🏆 🤖

Judgment Day

OC OC

The humans called it Judgment Day.

It was easy enough for our experts to figure that out. It didn't take the best xenolinguistics people we had to figure that one out, though that's who they put on the problem.

They were easily able to track it down to a quaint ancient notion of the end of the world from human religious texts.

Worlds ending were hardly anything new. The undefeated holy forces of the Emperor, may he live forever, had ended plenty of worlds.

Still, there was a lot of laughing in the ranks when everyone realized the primitives were naming their attack after an account from an ancient religious book that would've been long since discredited as any sort of real authority in any non-backwater civilization.

A lot of people said it was yet another sign they needed to be wiped off the face of the galaxy before they could spread their curious and dangerous notions too far.

The last thing the galaxy needed was a bunch of fanatical religious primates barely down from the trees, evolutionarily speaking, leading a technological jihad through the rest of the civilized galaxy.

I knew better, though.

Not that anyone listened. I was just a lowly pilot trainee with an interest in human culture, after all. Something that already made me suspect in the eyes of my peers and superiors.

Something clanged down the hall. I paused in my launch pod, worried. It was coming for me.

Judgment day.

I didn't think I was better than the best xenolinguistic experts in the Emperor's vast civilization, but I knew better. I could speak the humans' second language.

A scream rang down from the hall. I looked at my launch indicator. It wouldn't be long now. I was so close. All I needed to do was...

That scream quickly turned to a gargle. Followed by a sick wet noise and a crunch.

I'd studied the humans, of course. I did an exchange program with them before I enlisted in the Imperial Academy.

My parents thought I was insane. Who would go and stay with the humans? What could a properly civilized beings ever hope to learn from a bunch of primitives?

I'd simply told them to live long and prosper, thinking about how I was emulating one of my favorite earth heroes by eschewing the Imperial Academy for a cycle and going to study with the humans instead.

The decision had seemed logical then.

I almost wish I hadn't done it now. Because now I knew what was coming for me.

My scales turned a few different shades of purple at another loud sound. A pod launching. I watched the trajectory on my holodisplay that showed me the battle.

It wasn't going well for the undefeated Imperial Navy. The thing about going around with a name like "undefeated" was you needed to be able to back up a boast like that.

And, to be fair, the undefeated Imperial Navy had always come out on top.

Until now.

The manned battlepod, a fancy word for high explosives piloted by a pilot trainee as a last resort, an ironic echo from human history that nobody appreciated when I brought it up, arced through space. For a moment I thought it might actually go towards the humans, but no.

It had the same trajectory as every other battlepod. At the last moment it janked to the side, did a little fancy maneuvering that would be impossible for any living creature to pull off without being turned into jelly on the bulkhead, and slammed into an undefeated Imperial Navy ship.

That ship was looking pretty defeated and full of holes now. Sort of like that Swiss cheese delicacy the humans introduced me to while I studied on their world.

The humans had been so kind and welcoming. Not at all like the primitive monkeys I'd been told to expect.

They had a rich culture, I'd discovered. Fanciful movies and ideas that were far beyond anything their species was actually capable of when they made those entertainments.

I'd developed a pet theory that it was their capacity for imagination that in large part had resulted in their surprisingly rapid rise to the galactic stage.

Another clang rang out, closer now. The things were close enough that I could make out the mumble of a conversation, even if I couldn't make out actual words.

The mumbled conversation quickly turned to screams. A plasma blaster rang out, and then there was silence. A pod two down from mine launched, but I didn't think it was an Imperial trainee pilot on there looking to render one last service to the Emperor with their death.

The ship arced through space again, only to turn and slam into the carrier, sending a shudder running through the bulkhead all around me.

That definitely hadn't been one of our own piloting the thing.

I'd learned a lot about the humans while I was on their world. They could be the kindest and most welcoming creatures I knew, but there was also a capacity for something else in them.

That was what had me so ill at ease when the Imperial Navy announced the preemptive attack against some of the outlying human colony worlds that were getting too close to Imperial space.

Not in Imperial space, mind you, but close enough that the Emperor, who probably wasn't going to live forever given the way the current conflict was going, wanted to send a message.

The message had been received, all right. Loud and clear, as my human companions said.

It brought to mind an apocryphal quote from one of their ancient admirals. The very one who started the conflict that ended with them flinging raw trainees strapped to primitive flying machines that were barely a couple of wings and some high explosives at their enemies in a desperate bid to stave off ultimate defeat. Something about waking sleeping giants and filling them with a terrible resolve.

This time the loud clang came on my blast door. I turned and looked at the thing in fear.

Judgment Day. It had come for me at last.

I reached over and hit a button to open the door. I knew there was no point fighting what was out there. The human's ultimate weapon. Something ripped out of the nightmares of an ancient movie my fellow students showed me late one night.

The thing had been laughably primitive, even by the standards of what they considered "special effects" in their movies, and yet that ancient entertainment from before the earth governments consolidated had held me, transfixed, until it was over.

The door swished open and the creature staring back at me was both terrifying and impressive.

It looked like the propaganda ideal of a sailor in the Imperial Navy that actual sailors in the Imperial Navy never quite lived up to. Another one moving behind it, no doubt on its way to the pod next to mine.

Both totally naked. Both were tall, broad shouldered, and they had a little too much muscle for a pilot. They had a little too much muscle for anyone in the Imperial forces, for that matter.

Even the grunts tasked with security and doing crazy things like flying down to a planet to pacify hot zones who always had more muscle than brains.

Supposedly the star of the human movie had spent originally risen to fame by making his muscles bigger, of all things, though to hear the humans reverently speak of his memory he also had charisma and intelligence to go with the muscles.

A funny species, the humans.

The thing stepped in, looking me over in the small cockpit. It held a hand out.

"I need your uniform, your boots, and your battle pod."

I stared up at the thing. It really was a creature out of nightmares. I knew I should've just given it the codes to the battle pod. I thought about the wet sounds I'd heard. The plasma blasts. I looked at the line of the naked creatures moving through the ship behind the one accosting me, each and every one of them in search of clothes and keys.

It was ridiculous. If the humans could make creatures like this then they didn't need to go to the extra trouble of giving them a fleshy exterior. They could've just sent the battle hardened exoskeletons I knew were underneath. But that wasn't the humans' style.

No, they were sending a message and having some fun as they killed us. The magnificent bastards.

And so the next line came to my lips without thinking. I'd discovered the humans used their popular culture as a second language, and reflexively quoting movies was second nature to me after my stint on earth.

"You forgot to say please."

The creature paused. It cocked its head to the side and seemed to regard me with new eyes. New glowing red eyes, I might add, though that red glow appeared and disappeared in flash.

"You are a friend to humanity?" the thing asked, its impassive face taking in the cramped battlepod cockpit.

That look seemed to say that it doubted a friend of humanity would be strapped to a bunch of high explosives meant to destroy the invading human fleet, but it never gave away any emotion despite communicating that incredulity.

It never would give away any emotion.

I knew this thing couldn't be bargained with. It couldn't be reasoned with. It didn't feel pity, or remorse, or fear.

The humans could, though, and they programmed this thing. All I could do was hope that was enough to save me.

It wouldn't be enough to save the undefeated Imperial Navy, that was for sure.

"I studied on earth for a couple of semesters," I said. "I'm a fan of the culture. I didn't want any of this to happen, but it's not like anyone listened to a low rank pilot trainee when they decided to glass those colony worlds."

The thing paused again. It seemed to be thinking. And something rose inside me for the first time since this whole mess started. Something I hadn't thought I'd ever feel again.

Hope.

Finally it took a step forward and hit a button to close the cockpit. Then it held a hand out to me.

"Come with me if you want to live."

Author's Note:

I was watching T2 last week in honor of the 30th anniversary (God that makes me feel old typing that out) and this story popped into my head. It's short and silly, but I hope you liked it!